

March 27, 2016  
Sunday Evening Service  
Series: Psalms  
Community Baptist Church  
643 S. Suber Road  
Greer, SC 29650  
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## THE JOY OF RESTORED FELLOWSHIP Psalm 51

One of the saddest stories in the Bible is David's sin of adultery with Bathsheba and his sin of murder in an attempt to cover his sin of adultery. We all know the story. When David committed adultery with Uriah's wife, she got pregnant. In an attempt to cover the sin, David intentionally had Bathsheba's husband placed at the front of the battle where he was certain to be killed. He was and David added Bathsheba to his collection of wives (which in itself we would call adultery). Everything was cool. No one was pressing the point that according to God's law the people should have stoned David to death for adultery (Lev. 20:10), and they should have stoned him to death a second time for murder (Lev. 24:17). Which would be overkill.

In God's grace and mercy no one stoned David. Do we fault God for being gracious? In fact, God was so gracious that He waited for at least nine months for David to confess his sin—which he didn't do. Finally, God sent His prophet Nathan to David to help David understand that God did not approve of his sin and that according to the law David should have been executed. He told David the story of a wealthy man who stole a poor man's sheep and killed it. No doubt David declared with authority, "That man deserves to die." Immediately, Nathan said, "You are that man, David."

At that moment God did a wonderful thing. He brought conviction into David's heart so mightily that David was crushed. He broke down and confessed his sin and repented. At some point after that crisis in humility, David wrote this song. It is a wonderful song about how God drives us to repentance when we have sinned. It is a song about God's grace to forgive us and restore us to fellowship with Him. It is a great song for the temple choir to sing because it

exalts God's graciousness. It is a great song for us to contemplate because we need to remember God's grace and be open and honest with Him.

### Acknowledge Sin (vv.1-5,14a).

The first thing we must do when we desire to deal with sin is to call sin what it is. In this Psalm, David gave us six definitions of sin. First, we learn that sin is transgression. David prayed, *blot out my transgressions (v.1b)*. And, *For I know my transgressions (v.3a)*. To transgress is to step over a boundary, which might include failing to do what a covenant requires or doing what a covenant forbids. In this case, the word leans more toward rebellion.

Rebellion requires that we are aware of a law or rule against which we rebel. We know there is a God and we know what He is like. When our life is characterized by living contrary to God's character, we are in rebellion against Him. If there was no God, there would be no rebellion. But since God is, we are guilty before Him. Notice that rebellion is personal. David admitted that it is *my* transgression. The idea of rebellion against an authority is bad enough—but especially against the Creator. When it is my personal rebellion against my Creator that is a very serious crime. We are right to come face-to-face with our sin and call it "my rebellion against my Creator."

Second, sin is iniquity. David prayed, *Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity (v.2a)*. Iniquity is a bending, distortion, twisting of something. It also speaks of the guilt that is gained and the punishment that is deserved by distorting a law or rule. When we sin against God, we are twisting its character which is revealed in His law and precepts. David knew that God is opposed to adultery and murder, but he did it anyway. We are wise to call our sin a perversion of God's standard of righteousness which is the expression of His character. Again this is not a general condition of not measuring up to God's high expectations but *my* intentional, willful, perverting of God's character.

Third, sin is . . . well sin. David longed for God to *cleanse me from my sin! (v.2b)*. He admitted that *my sin is ever before me(v.3b)*. To sin is to miss the mark. In a very practical use of the word, we

read in Judges that the warriors from the tribe of Benjamin could sling a stone and not *miss the mark*. Likewise, in the early history of God's people, when they were slaves in Egypt, the rulers withheld straw from the Israelites but still required that they not *miss the mark* of the quota of bricks.

When we rebel against God's character or just choose not to achieve His standard, we miss the mark. There is a certain moral standard God expects us to live up to. Refusal to meet it or failure to meet it is sin. It is our responsibility that we either intentionally or purposely miss the mark God has established.

Fourth, sin is an attack against God. *Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment (v.4)*. Here David revealed how we miss God's mark (*sinned*), and how by missing His standard we do what is evil in God's sight. Evil is that which God calls harmful, malignant, bad, disagreeable. Obviously, therefore, when we sin we are doing that which displeases our Creator. We do these things in God's plain sight. Attack is a good way to describe our actions.

This attack is against God alone according to David. Do we struggle with that conclusion? What about Bathsheba, Uriah, David's own family, the whole population of Israel? Actually, this statement is not a denial that our sin affects the people around us. Rather, it shows David's heart for God. Regardless of what anyone or everyone else thinks or desires to do to or for David, only God matters at this point. His kingdom and family may wish to punish him—so be it. Or, his kingdom and family may wish to acquit him—so be it. What they do is irrelevant compared to David's relationship to God who he loves supremely.

The real and deepest grief we should sense in sin is not what we do to others as much as what we do to God. Typically our chief concern in sin is, "What will this cost me?" Our second concern is, "What will this cost my family or friends?" Do we ever get around to wondering what God thinks?

Fifth, David concluded that sin is part of human nature. He confessed, *Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me (v.5)*. This is not an excuse for sin or an attempt to copout of responsibility. Nor is David saying that he committed

adultery because his mother conceived him while committing adultery. This is a tacit acknowledgment that I am a sinner by birth, I possess the sin nature, I will sin if I do not discipline my body and keep it in subjection to God. It is an admission about how easy it is for us to rebel against God when we are being careless.

Sixth, when David confessed sin, he was very specific about the sin. He prayed that God would, *Deliver me from bloodguiltiness (v.14a)*. Yes, it was sin. But in David's mind it was not just sin or transgression or iniquity. He confessed to God, "I murdered an innocent man!" It is a lesson for us to call sin what it is in all its horrible ugliness before God.

Then, having said the same thing about sin that God says, in order to have the joy of salvation restored, we need to appeal to God's mercy. Pray with David, *Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy (v.1a)*. God offers mercy. That means that we sinners need to ask God to show His heartfelt gracious favor to us. Mercy is sympathetic. Mercy withholds the punishment that is deserved or earned. When God shows us mercy, He does not give us what we deserve.

We need God's mercy according to His abundant, tender compassion. The second word translated *mercy* in this verse is a totally different Hebrew word from the first occurrence of mercy in the verse. This word speaks of the deep compassion a parent has for her child. God has this tenderness toward His created beings. That is why offending Him with our rebellion is such a grievous thing. We need to plead for God to show us this compassion according to (not out of) His abundance.

Suppose a very wealthy man offers you a gift. Let's say that he is worth a few billion dollars. His offer is that he will give you a gift "out of" his wealth or "according to his wealth." You get to choose which it will be. What's the difference? "Out of" his wealth the man could give you five dollars. "According to" his wealth will be a gift that reflects his billions of dollars. I'm going to choose option "B." When we become aware of our rebellion and transgression against our Creator, we need mercy according to His abundant compassion.

It is good to learn in this text that God's mercy is rooted in His love. His mercy is *according to your steadfast love*. The single Hebrew word translated *steadfast love* refers to a great Old Testament

concept that reveals God's loyalty to His word and promises. We are certain to find mercy with God when we confess our sins because God is unwaveringly loyal to His promise to forgive and show mercy. God will have mercy. We only need to ask. Having confessed our sin and resorted to God for mercy, we must desire cleansing so that we can enjoy restored fellowship with God.

### **Desire Cleansing to Restore Fellowship (vv.6-12).**

We need to ask God to remove guilt (vv.6,7,9,10a). This should be easy since we know what God expects, and, therefore, we know why we are guilty. *Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart (v.6)*. Everyone with a conscience knows that God expects us to live according to the truth He reveals. His truth is the expression of His character. He reveals that character in all He has created, in our conscience, and in His law. Especially as we read the Bible, God impresses the wisdom of His truth on our hearts. Therefore, as the Bible says, we are without excuse.

It is not that we need more knowledge about God. We simply need to acknowledge the truth that God has already given to us. When we sin, we have transgressed that truth; we have rebelled against it. And because we know God's truth, we know that only God can make us clean. There are seven statements in this Psalm that describe how God makes us clean from the infection of sin.

First, He blots out transgression. David begged God, *blot out my transgressions (v.1b)*. Again, the issue is rebellion against God's boundaries. God's work is to wipe away the evidence of our rebellion. To wipe out is what God did when He blotted every living thing from the earth in the flood. It is pictured as God wiping clean our dirty vessel. There are dishes in our cupboard that I once used to eat blueberry crumb cake. You would be quite embarrassed if you visited us for dessert and we gave you a dish that still had the evidence of blueberries. That won't happen because my wife wipes away all the evidence when she puts the dishes in the dish-blottier. When I confess my sins to God, He wipes this vessel spotlessly clean.

Second, God washes away iniquity. *Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity (v.2a)*. The issue here is my twisting and distorting of God's righteousness. God thoroughly removes all stain of such perversion from my soul. I have taken a garment to the dry cleaners before only to have the dry cleaner guy tell me that a particular spot just cannot be removed. That never happens with God. God removes all evidence of my iniquity when I confess it to Him.

Third, He cleanses from sin. David specifically asked God to *cleanse me from my sin! (v.2)*. The problem is that I miss the mark of God's righteousness. When I confess that to God, He purifies me like a filter that removes all impurities from the water. When God purifies me, He restores His righteousness within my heart.

Fourth, God purges with hyssop. *Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow (v.7)*. To purge is to purify from uncleanness, generally in a ceremonial sense. The Old Testament leper was to bring a sacrifice to the priest. The priest killed the sacrifice, dipped a branch of hyssop in the blood, and then sprinkled the blood on the leper as a symbol of purification from his disease. This is a picture of what happens in our hearts when God purges us from the effects of sin.

Fifth, God hides sin. *Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities (v.9)*. We confess that we have missed God's standard and have twisted the truth revealed in His law. In response to our confession, God hides His face from our sin. It is not that He becomes unaware of our offenses. Rather He chooses not to look on our failures. He does exactly what He established as righteous reaction. *Whoever covers an offense seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates close friends (Proverbs 17:9)*.

Sixth, God creates a clean heart. *Create in me a clean heart (v.10a)*. In place of the infectious, dirty sin, God creates a clean heart. The heart is the soul of the person, the real person, the seat of the intellect, emotions, and will. God who spoke all things into existence in creation can certainly create a new heart within us. The new heart is ceremonially pure, clean according to God's standards, free from the defilement of sin.

Seventh, God delivers from guilt. David prayed, *Deliver me from bloodguiltiness (v.14a)*. To deliver is to snatch away, cause escape. The issue here was the guilt of shedding blood. God is able

and willing to snatch us away from the guilt of even a sin, a perversion, a crime as horrible as murder.

Because God does this amazing work of removing every blemish of our sins, we are able to ask God to restore fellowship (vv.8,10,11-12). There are four specific requests for God to restore in this Psalm. First is the request for renewed joy. *Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice (v.8)*. There is joy and gladness in the heart of the person who is right with God. We forfeit that joy when we sin. Our desire must be for God to cleanse us and put us back in the glad fellowship with Him. God often “breaks our spiritual bones” (or maybe even a literal bone) in order to help us see how we have offended Him. When God restores fellowship, He heals those broken spots.

This the same thing David requested when he prayed, *Restore to me the joy of your salvation (v.12a)*. There is great joy in realizing that our sin has been covered over and we can walk in fellowship with our Creator. There is great joy in knowing that God has delivered us from the rightly deserved penalty of our sins. We forfeit that joy when we choose to rebel against God, to twist His standards, to miss His mark. The person who is able to sin against God and not be miserable is one who has no presence of God within. Grieving God steals our joy. When we confess and repent, God restores that joy.

Second, we need to ask God for a right spirit. *O God, and renew a right spirit within me (v.10b)*. God created us to have fellowship with Him. When we are right with God, our spirit is in fellowship with God the Holy Spirit who is within. When we rebel against God, there is conflict between our spirit and God’s Spirit. Confession and repentance renew the fellowship.

Third, we request fellowship. *Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me (v.11)*. People who are born again and indwelt by the Holy Spirit cannot have the Spirit taken away. However we can grieve the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30), and we can quench the Spirit’s influence (1 Thes. 5:19). Both of these are the result of sin which breaks fellowship with God.

Fourth, we need to request God to give us a willing spirit. David prayed for God to *uphold me with a willing spirit (v.12b)*. A willing spirit is a heart that responds spontaneously to God. Confession and

repentance make it possible for God to continue to sustain us with a spirit that spontaneously desires to do His will. What do we suppose would be the result of such a spirit?

### **Serve God (vv.13-19).**

One obvious and great way to serve God is to teach others (vv.13-17). We teach them God’s ways. Forgiven and restored sinners are certainly aware of God’s ways. We surely know God’s way is to bring sinners back to Him. David vowed, *Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you (v.13)*. Restored sinners desire the same kind of restoration for other sinners. We know from experience that God will bring us back to Himself. We desire to teach that “way” to those who are in rebellion against God.

We have learned that God’s way is a humble heart. David learned *For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering (v.16)*. And *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise (v.17)*. We too should have learned that God is pleased with the sacrificed heart not a sacrificed animal. We long for sinners to experience broken, shattered, powerless hearts (wills). We cannot make a sinner humble, but we pray that God will.

Another way to serve God is to teach through song. If we are going to teach about God through music, we will need to sing good doctrine. We will need to sing about the righteousness of the God of our salvation. That should be the response of delivered people. *Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness (v.14)*. Along with that message we will declare God’s praise. *O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise (v.15)*.

This is still the standard for Christ’s Body. God’s Word teaches us who are the Body of Christ to specifically teach and admonish in song. *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God (Colossians 3:16)*. We are to make melody to the Lord. Paul warned Christians in Ephesus, *And do not get drunk with wine, for that is*

*debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 5:18-20).*

Not only do restored sinners teach others, but we are engaged in prayer (vv.18-19). After God restores us, we are in a position to pray for others. David prayed, *Do good to Zion in your good pleasure; build up the walls of Jerusalem (v.18)*. Do you pray for God to protect and bless His people?

Also, after God restores us, we can give to Him the sacrifice of praise. When he was restored, David promised, *then will you delight in right sacrifices, in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings; then bulls will be offered on your altar (v.19)*. After we are restored to God we can do acts or worship and service that will please Him because those acts honor Him. How sad that many sinners try to appease God by doing religious acts. Our worship is the result of restoration not an attempt to gain restoration.

Restoration to God is found only through the crushed spirit that recognizes our rebellion as we have perverted God's way. When we are crushed in our spirits, we will cry out to God who will cleanse us and purify our hearts. Then we will know the restored joy of fellowship.